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NYT probes push to unionize carwash workers

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LOS ANGELES — An article in [The New York Times](#) is detailing the movement attempting to unionize carwash workers in Los Angeles.

The Sept. 7 story said most carwash operators are against unionization, although labor organizers remain committed to their cause.

According to *The Times*, "many of the estimated 10,000 workers in the business here are illegal immigrants, who are too scared to speak out or give their bosses any excuse to fire them."

The article said California officials have estimated that two-thirds of the 500 carwashes in Los Angeles violate workplace laws. Most recently, the city was successful in sending carwash owners Benny and Nisan Pirian [to jail for minimum-wage violations](#).

As *Professional Carwashing & Detailing e-News* has previously reported, the push to unionize was started by the [Community-Labor-Environmental Action Network](#) (CLEAN) under the umbrella of the United Steelworkers. So far the group has [organized rallies, candlelight vigils, and pickets](#) outside of carwash businesses. In November 2009, CLEAN designed a billboard on Sunset Boulevard which said, "Wash Away Injustice: Boycott Vermont Hand Wash."

As Randy Cressall, owner of Valencia AutoSpa in Valencia, CA, pointed out, many honest carwash operators are upset over the unionization movement, as well as the operators acting illegally.

"They're a blight on our industry," Cressall, a former president of the Western Carwash Association, said in the article. "As good operators, we don't like them to be on the same playing field as us."

Cressall said he believed that 95 percent of California's carwashes operate within the scope of the law and that unions within the industry would only hurt the workers.

"Having a union will mean higher wages, and that will lead to higher prices," he said in

the article. "That will mean fewer consumers coming to carwashes, and fewer jobs for these workers."

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